

How Do I Flush Alcohol Out of My System?



If you're looking to sober up faster, want to pass a sobriety test, or are supposed to be staying sober for court-ordered purposes and haven't managed, you might want to know how to flush alcohol out of your system more quickly.

However, the short answer to this is that if you're looking to flush alcohol out of your system to pass a drug test, you can't. The longer answer is that you can speed up [how quickly your body processes alcohol](#) or how quickly you get over a hangover. Doing that

will mean understanding how your body processes alcohol and what impacts how quickly it does so.

What is Flushing Alcohol from Your System?

For most people, the term “flushing” alcohol is synonymous with a quick detox. Here, you normally want to remove traces of alcohol from your system, may want to sober up, and likely want to pass a toxicology test, such as an [alcohol breath test](#) or a [hair alcohol test](#).

In most cases, people try to drink more water, may engage in dieting, or may take herbal supplements. None of these will speed up how your body detoxes from alcohol and none of them will affect a toxicology test – unless the herbal supplement shows up on the test.

Understanding How You Metabolize Alcohol

In most cases, alcohol stays in your system for up to 12 hours. This means that you can detect it with a blood test for up to 12 hours after your last drink and up to 2 months via a hair test. A breathalyzer, on the other hand, can detect alcohol for 13-24 hours depending on how much you drank and the test. Urine tests can detect alcohol anywhere from 12 to 80 hours after your last drink.

So, tests can vary in sensitivity, but all of them rely on your body having [ethanol or ethyl alcohol](#) in the system. Your body breaks this down at a rate of about 1 serving of alcohol per hour – but the traces will stay in your system for much longer.

Normally, alcohol is consumed orally, where it goes into the stomach and is then absorbed as it moves into the small intestine. Afterwards, it moves into the bloodstream, where it stays until it’s filtered out by the liver. Once that happens, you’ll start to sober up. But, your urine will still show traces of alcohol for up to 80 hours.

What Impacts How Long Alcohol Stays in Your System

While it’s difficult to speed up how quickly your body processes alcohol on purpose, there are several factors that impact it. For example:

- **Having a fast metabolism** – Some people metabolize alcohol more quickly than others. However, this is entirely genetic.
- **Drinking on an empty stomach** – Alcohol is metabolized as it moves into the small intestine. If you’ve eaten, it will take longer for alcohol to move from your stomach to the small intestine.
- **Drinking carbonated beverages** – Carbonated beverages are absorbed more quickly because they create pressure in the stomach, moving liquids into the small intestine more quickly. Therefore, you’ll get drunk faster, but you’ll also metabolize the alcohol more quickly.
- **Weight** – People with higher body fat will take longer to process alcohol, because ethanol is stored in fat cells and impeded by fat cells in the liver. This means that the higher your body fat percentage, the longer you’re likely to show positive for drinking on a test
- **How quickly you drink** – Your body metabolizes alcohol as you drink it. However, alcohol metabolizes at a rate of about half of the volume of alcohol in your body per 4-6 hours. This means that higher quantities of alcohol over a shorter period of time result in your body retaining alcohol for longer, because the rate of metabolizing the amount of alcohol in your bloodstream to half does not change.
- **Liver health** – A healthy liver will always filter alcohol more quickly than one with scarring, fatty liver disease, or [cirrhosis](#).
- **Medication** – There are several medications that can slow down how quickly you metabolize alcohol. That may mean you show positive on alcohol tests for longer or that you feel drunk for longer.

Metabolizing alcohol is a complex process and most ranges are “averages” rather than how long it will specifically take you to metabolize that alcohol.

Get Your Questions Answered Now

CALL US (888) 450-2920

Tips to Recover from Drinking More Quickly

If you've been drinking and you'd like to speed up recovery, there isn't much you can do except ensuring you get enough sleep, going for a walk, and maybe drinking something carbonated. However, if you haven't started drinking yet, you can take steps to ensure you can process alcohol as quickly as possible.

- **Drink plenty of water** – Water helps flush alcohol to the liver, meaning you'll likely metabolize it slightly faster. In addition, you'll suffer from fewer of the effects of dehydration, meaning less or no hangover.
- **Get plenty of sleep after** – Getting enough sleep ensures your body has time to recover, giving your liver the time it needs to filter alcohol from your system.
- **Drink soda** – Drinking soda or carbonated water while you're drinking can help you to metabolize alcohol more quickly.
- **Don't drink too much** – Your body metabolizes about 1 serving of alcohol per hour. That's just under half a beer or half a glass of wine for most people. If you drink alcohol slowly, your metabolism will keep up and you'll have less alcohol in your system.



Importantly, there are dozens of herbal remedies sold to flush alcohol from your system. None of these options work. Instead, some can actually harm your liver. Others will do nothing at all. In general, any over the counter medication that promises to flush alcohol out of your system is lying. If you decide to start taking herbal supplements, make sure you talk to your doctor first and discuss how those supplements will interact with any medication you're on, with your liver, and with alcohol.

If you're trying to quit drinking, detoxing from alcohol will normally take 1-2 weeks. On the other hand, if you're trying to quickly get alcohol out of your system for a drug and alcohol test or for a court ordered alcohol test, you're out of luck. There's nothing you can do to speed up how quickly alcohol leaves your system. In some cases, drinking a lot of water before a urine test can reduce the reliability of the test. Using mouthwash before a breathalyzer test can also reduce the reliability of that test. And, dying your hair with harsh chemicals can reduce the reliability of a hair test. However, none of these options are guaranteed. In addition, if you have to hide alcohol use, it's a good sign that you need help. If you're struggling to curb alcohol use or to quit, even with a court order, it's a good sign that you should ask for help.

If you or a loved one is seeking help for alcohol or other substance abuse, [contact us](#) at Stairway Resource Center today. The Stairway Resource Center offers a 60 to 90-day [outpatient program](#) that takes place in a community setting. We offer [dual diagnosis treatment](#) and daily [group and individual therapy](#) for our clients.



Dave Campbell, AMFT

Therapist

A former professional and one-time World Champion athlete, David hurt his back in competition and subsequently developed an addiction to his prescribed pain medication. After completing his own stay in treatment, David discovered both meaning and purpose in helping others find recovery and walked away from a prestigious J.D./M.B.A program to focus on psychology full-time. After completing his Master's in Psychology, he began pursuing his Doctor of Social Work degree from The University of Southern California.

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